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SUBJECT: MCNS -- SEPTEMBER 3: BSP UPDATE AND MOSQUE POLICY

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Daniel V. Speckhard for Reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S) SUMMARY: In the Prime Minister's absence, National Security Advisor Rubaie chaired the September 3 Ministerial Committee on National Security -- despite the fact that both Deputy PMs (Barham Salih and Salam al-Zubai) were in attendance. General Casey argued that the Baghdad Security Plan is showing positive results, with car bombs and other violence down in August. Deputy Prime Minister al-Zubai and Iraqi Intelligence Service DG al-Shawani expressed skepticism, however, noting continuing attacks. Interior Minister al-Bolani criticized al-Shawani for failing to understand the threats against the GOI and the Iraqi people. Ministers agreed that the provision of civil services is necessary for the BSP to succeed. Al-Bolani and General Casey urged the Minister of Finance to reopen banks in Doura and Ameriya; Casey also urged ministers to tour areas cleared during BSP operations. Although Rubaie praised security forces for a recent operation at a mosque, al-Zubai was upset that he had not been briefed on the operation in advance. Ministers discussed the protection of mosques, including whether a single protection force should be formed under an existing ministry. END SUMMARY.

#### Baghdad Security Plan Update and the Need for Services

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12. (S) General Casey argued that the Baghdad Security Plan was showing positive results, with violent incidents such as Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices down during the month of August. INIS DG al-Shawani said major attacks are still occurring and people still being killed, adding that one day last week had seen a large number of coordinated rocket attacks. General Casey disputed the claim that rockets had been used, noting that Coalition radar had not acquired any incoming rockets during the referenced incident. Interior Minister al-Bolani agreed, arguing that IEDs, not rockets, had been used.

13. (S) Changing tack, al-Bolani used the incident as an opportunity to criticize al-Shawani and the INIS. He pointed out that terrorists had been able to infiltrate a neighborhood, place IEDs, and detonate them without INIS being able to provide the government any warning. On the defensive, al-Shawani shot back that since the neighborhood involved was a Shia area (Sadr City) and he did not believe that Sunnis would be able to infiltrate it unnoticed, his conclusion was that those involved were from the neighborhood (and, by implication, Shia).

14. (S) Broadening the discussion still further, al-Bolani argued that the provision of services needed to be an

integral part of the BSP. Turning to MinFin Jabr, he said that the Finance Ministry needed to open the banks in Doura. Jabr asked if the Interior Ministry could guarantee that the banks would not be looted again. General Casey said that sufficient forces could be available to prevent looting, adding that it was important that the banks in both Doura and Ameriya be opened as quickly as possible.

15. (S) Joining the discussion, DPM al-Zubai said he did not believe the security situation was getting better. He claimed that one of the members of his security detail had recently been kidnapped and was being held for \$10,000 ransom. He also provided what he claimed were examples of penetration of the security services, as well as corruption (which he blamed on both Shias and Sunnis). Linking the corruption to the issue of services, he argued that many town hall workers receive wages for doing nothing. Pointing out that "rubbish is everywhere," he asserted that town halls had the money to provide services, but were not doing so -- a claim that led al-Zubaydi to ask "where is your proof?"

16. (S) Summarizing the discussion, Rubaie said that penetration of the security services, the status of the militias and JaM, corruption, and the ability to provide services all impact on the BSP. He suggested that DPM al-Zubai could coordinate with ministries on the provision of services to areas cleared during the BSP. In response, General Casey said that without unhinging existing processes, he would look into the possibility of such a role for al-Zubai. Casey also urged ministers to visit areas cleared by the BSP. UK Ambassador Asquith joined in stressing the importance of the provision of services. Asquith cautioned that people in Ameriya were already talking of bombs and

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kidnappings coming back.

#### MOSQUE POLICY

17. (S) Rubaie praised a recent MoI/MoD operation at a mosque, noting that the security services had been respectful of the holy shrine and had not resorted to breaking down doors or shooting people. In contrast to previous operations at mosques, media reaction had been minimal. Al-Zubai asked why he -- as an executive in the government -- had not been informed of the operation before it happened. Rubaie said no one outside the Prime Minister and the relevant security services had been informed for the sake of operational security. Al-Zubai was not mollified, terming the decision to keep him in the dark "unacceptable."

18. (S) Rubaie said that a document had been distributed to ministers on the issue of the protection of mosques; he asked ministers to read the document and provide comments, stressing that terrorist attacks on mosques could lead to "holy war." Noting that each holy place currently has its own protection service, Rubaie asked whether protection should be consolidated under one government ministry, such as the MoI. Citing the August 25 penetration of checkpoints around a holy site in Karbala, Rubaie said that existing personnel were not properly vetted and often lacked relevant training and experience. Minister of State for National Security Shirwan al-Waeli suggested having a distinct service under a new Committee for Holy Shrines, arguing that those protecting mosques would also need to be able to deal effectively with the people (worshippers, scholars, etc.) who visit them. DPM al-Zubai, however, argued that security was the prime consideration. With regard to protection of religious pilgrimages, Interior Minister al-Bolani said it was important that MoI and MoD be seen to protect the pilgrims and high-profile visitors; holy sites should not rely on illegal militias for protection.

#### COMMENT

19. (S) This meeting was more notable for the personal and professional dynamics involved than for the substance discussed. Despite the presence of both Deputy Prime Ministers (although Barham Salih did leave during the course of the meeting), the unelected National Security Advisor was able to take the chair. INIS DG al-Shawani seemed out of his depth, unable to accurately describe the circumstances of the IED attacks discussed or to convincingly defend his service when attacked. On the other hand, the Sunni-Shia tensions in the government probably had much to do with Interior Minister al-Bolani's (a Shia) attack on al-Shawani (a Sunni) and the INIS. It is likely that Sunni frustration was also a significant factor in Deputy Prime Minister al-Zubai's forceful interventions.

KHALILZAD